

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, December 23, 1891, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B., Dec. 23rd, 1891. JOURNAL Dec. 23rd, 1891.

Newspapers and Scientific Journals in bed till noon. Damp day — snow nearly all gone. Damp underfoot — fair overhead. After lunch tried shooting match with Mr. McCurdy and Mr. Ellis. Mr. Ellis has a small rifle — which shoots very accurately. Mr. McCurdy drove a tack with a bullet from other side of laboratory. Took it, the rifle, up the mountain in case a fox or partridge should make its appearance. Saw nothing to shoot — excepting rabbits in the woods at sheep-town. Pretty things — now snow-white — they have become so tame as to approach within six feet. We let them alone did not shoot them. Four Eves came in today — making 24 in all since I came — an average of three a day. Still 33 natives and nearly all the Merinoes to come. Expect nearly all the Merinoes to be sterile. Becky seems now to be C. K. Maggie had been feeding her exclusively upon meat. Since I came — diet reduced to crackers and milk — with a bone as bon bouche after finishing the milk. At first would not touch crackers — and turned up her nose at milk — so let her starve and took her up the mountain every day. She now seems to enjoy her crackers and milk and her bone — and is now all right. Went wild over me when I came but was not satisfied — went out on the verandah to look for the others — and cried for them like a baby. Mr. Ellis has finished making 50 plaster moulds so I can commence experiments with them. The Carrier Pigeons are thriving in their new home over Mr. McInnis' office. Agreat many young ones, and quite a number of eggs — in spite of the frost and ice that has been outside. Invitation received from Mrs. Tremaine to dine there Christmas — accepted. Bought a lot of toys and children's books in Boston — and find in attic a number of things left over from last Christmas including Christmas cards bought by Elsie in Philadelphia. Have presents for Mr. McCurdy's children, Mr. Wm. McCurdy's children and the children of our employees.

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Will send Christmas cards to the sewing class from Mabel — and to the members of the children's club with both Elsie's and Daisy's love. Spent evening arranging disposition of presents. Have some nice books for the little deaf children accross the lake. Mr. McCurdy wants loan of Christmas tree decorations. He will have a Christmas tree for his children — in Baddeck — and will invite the children of the sewing class in Baddeck — to come and see it. Tomorrow will de devoted to Christmas arrangements. Maggie went into town this afternoon to see a cousin who is at the point of death.

Discussion with Mr. McCurdy over relation of Capital and labor. Hypothefical cases. 1. A man whittles a monkey's head on the handle of a stick — and thereby changes its value from 5 cents to 2 dollars. Increased value created by the labor — and therefore rightly belongs to the laborer. 2. A capitalist provides a stick for which he pays cents — and he then goes to a starving man and offers him a bone and a glass of water if he will whittle a monkey's head on the stick. Necessity obliges the laborer to accept. Capitalist sells the stick for 2 dollars. Cost to the Capitalist. Material — a stick — 5 cents.

labor — a bone and glass of water, 5 cents

Total 10 cents.

The profit is therefore \$1.90. This the capitalist pockets and does not share any of it with the laborer. Surely something wrong and inequitable in arrangement — Typical of relation between capital and labor. Thought. Impressed with the fact that correspondence between distant places will in future be carried on electrically instead of by mail.

What pleasure can there be in writing a letter to Italy — and receiving an answer in a month! When you know you can send a letter by telegraph and receive a reply the same day! Correspondence by mail between distant places will become a thing of past — moment the cost of telegraphy reduced to a minimum.

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The cost — and the necessity of employing intermediaries to transmit private matters — the only obstacles. The development of intermediaries — (except in the shape of machinery) — and application of old multiple Telegraph principle will greatly reduce cost. My old autograph telegraph should be developed and perfected into a practical machine. Great difficulty of all previous systems has lain in necessity of absolute synchronism between parts of apparatus separated by hundreds of miles. Multiple telegraph principle gets rid of this. Can also be got rid of in another way. Most autograph telegraphs are notating cylinders — and marker traces a spiral line. Use flat paper and let pencil mark series of parallel lines like line engraving. No difficulty in making two instruments at a distance from one another — trace a single line (say 6 or 8 inches in length) with substantial uniformity. Well let there be a distinct pause between the drawing of each line — and utilize this pause to bring both tracing points to their initial position. An electrical impulse can start them both at same time — and they will make next line O. K. — a pause — and then start again together. The pause before making each line — will enable us to get rid of necessity of complicated machinery, intended to produce synchronism — but which practically fails of its purpose when put to real use.

MERRY CHRISTMAS Noted at Beinn Bhreagh, C. B. Dec. 16, 1891.

P. S.

Agent of North German Lloyd telegraphs. "Reserved room 197 Werra January 23rd, price 250 dollars — best vacant."

Have telegraphed that I will go by another route — if they cannot give better stateroom.

Dec. 23, 1891. Alec.